

## Coffee Shop Manifesto

On a gray afternoon the neon sign illuminates the word cappuccino to the drizzling outside world. You amble in and are instantly overwhelmed by the chocolatey smell of dark roast coffee and the cacophony of salon-like chatter coming from the tables. The walls are covered in paintings from local artists. The painting of the dog catches your eye... \$4000 and your first born child. It's hard to give a numerical value to art but you're sure that is a misprint. Once you approach the barista you spend too long trying to figure out what you want. Your heart says frappuccino, but you know you're too sophisticated for that so you get an espresso.

It's crowded, but eventually you find an empty spot near the window. As you take your seat you give a gentle smile to the kid in the flannel and pretentious glasses reading Crime and Punishment. You think he's cute, but you don't really feel like facing the situational irony of him smoking a pack of Marlboro reds and talking about the problems of capitalism. So you open your Macbook and pretend to look busy.

You know you should be writing that college essay so you open a fresh page. Your reflection stares back at you in the blank word document. The vague common app prompts incite no inspiration in you, so you start typing what you think these people want to hear. How despite all of your birth given advantages, of being white and affluent, you are still plagued by your alcoholic bipolar mother. An apparent divide between the words you put on the paper and who you really are grows and as the page fills up you no longer see yourself.

Thunderous laughter from a table over breaks your train of thought. A group of boys about your age are playing chess to your right. One of them pulls out a guitar. He strums the intro to "Wonder Wall" and you roll your eyes. A homeless lady rummages through the garbage outside. As you peer back at the word document you know that no matter how messed up things have seemed there are still people who are able to find happiness at the bottom of a trash can. Backspace, backspace, backspace. You're once again back to the blank word document you started with. The door rattles open and a group of people in professional clothes walk in. Are they out of work already?

You check the time. It's already six and again you've accomplished nothing. You walk up and spend your last 5 dollars on another cup of coffee. As she pours your coffee the barista tells you she's majoring in political science, like you couldn't have guessed that. You tip

generously (she's gonna need it) and go back to your seat. A petite figure topped with blue hair walks in and orders a bubble tea. God, does she look annoying, but admittedly she's your best friend. She prances over to you and takes a seat and begins chattering about her cat, boys, and the last John Green book that she read which was "Not even that good." It becomes painfully apparent you are getting no work done.

As you look around the room at all the faces, your cynical disposition fades away and you see parts of yourself in all of them. The part that wants to be an artist and paint dogs, the part that pretends to like Russian literature, the part that likes bad cliché 90s alternative rock, the part that cares more about what interests you than what is practical, and the part that tries to find a metaphor in a coffee shop. You close your laptop and become part of the chatter. If only writing was as easy as sitting in a coffee shop.